

Star Wars

Wizard's RPG Stories

source : <http://www.wizards.com/default.asp?x=starwars/newsarchive>
upload : 10.IV.2006

Life's Memories

By Morrie Mullins Former Living Force Plot Director and Campaign Designer

Former Living Force Plot Director Morrie Mullins presents a supplement to the campaign's newest scenario. In "Life's Memories," two well-known Gamemaster characters examine the concept of death as it relates to the Force. "Life's Memories" ties into the July Living Force scenario, Excursion, the second part of the "Belted In" trilogy.

Some of the first Gamemaster characters encountered by Living Force heroes were San Herrera and Nia Reston, two young Humans with nothing but the best of intentions. San and Nia appeared in "The Resistance Within," as well as "Something Uffel," "Tilnes Rising," and most recently, "Memories." As the heroes have progressed, so have San and Nia, following what they perceive to be the will of the Force - - but in a non-Jedi fashion.

Recent months, including their own adventures, have given them a great deal to reflect upon, and issues of mortality weigh heavy on the minds of many in Cularin. In this - - their attempt at a scholarly treatise - - San and Nia discuss the meaning of "death," both as it is commonly understood and as they suggest we might better understand it in terms of the Force.

Thesis: In this paper, we will present the position that death is not well understood by the denizens of the galaxy, that a number of misconceptions and outright falsehoods exist, and that a different perspective may serve to better enable individuals to deal with the harsh reality of death. We discuss one such perspective and the advantages it may provide.

What begins, ends.

What is born, dies.

All that is made can be un-made.

Dark has no meaning without light,

And for all living things

there is the final

silence. (1)

The galaxy is wide, and the variety of species almost beyond counting. Hutt and Human, Verpine and Vuvrian - - the differences from one star system to another, even from one planet to another, can be astounding. Yet, for all the differences that exist across peoples(2) there is a common thread. All of

us who live will, one day, die.

As children, we do not understand death. It is a specter, a threat that has no meaning to us. Who dies? We don't die. People talk about dying, but is it real? Of course not, because we ourselves have never died, nor do we plan to.

The mind of the child is incapable of grasping the concept of its own cessation. Some look at children and envy them; lucky, to not know that you will one day die.

Others look at children and pity them; a shame, that the child believes in something that can never be. A shame that one day the child will learn, as we did, that life ends, that everything we see and know and experience one day simply ceases to exist for us.

We ask this question: Who is to be envied, and who is to be pitied? We would argue that the "adults" in both of the above examples are, in fact, the ones to be pitied, as the adults have come to an understanding of "death" that is inherently flawed.

Does that mean that the children are to be envied? No. These children will be taught the "reality" of death by adults, many of whom possess a flawed understanding of what death means. They will learn to fear death. They will learn that death is something "bad," rather than a natural part of life. They will come to view death as an ending, rather than simply another step in what is, inherently, a natural progression.

This is a time, in Cularin and in the galaxy at large, in which many of us are considering the meaning of death. As war rages, we find ourselves faced daily with reports from battlefields on distant worlds, images of ships blasting away at other ships amidst fields of peaceful stars that will not change no matter what we do to one another. Even here, we lose those we love and respect, and many view such passings with sadness. At a recent memorial service, Mother Dariana spoke a few words about the service - - which was treated not as a time for mourning but as a celebration of a life well-lived - - in which she said the following: "This isn't about [the deceased]. That's what you learn, when you see enough of these. It's almost never about what the person who's moved on would have wanted. It's about what the people who are still living need." (3) "Belted In" Trilogy Summary Nirama, the enigmatic alien crime lord, has an agenda - - a very public agenda. He's not happy about recent goings-on in Cularin, and he's less happy with the strangeness in the asteroid belt that he calls "home." Is Nirama helping the people of Cularin, are the people helping him, or is it actually mutual?

What do the living need, though? What is necessary to allow us to "cope" with death?

Perhaps the hardest part of death for many individuals to contend with is the feeling of emptiness, of loss, that results when someone who has been part of our lives is suddenly no longer. Certainly, there are elements of fear and uncertainty that play into that - - if the person is no longer here, where have they gone? Did they simply cease to exist, and if so, does that not violate the basic laws of physics?

At this point, you may have become skeptical. How could death possibly violate a physical law? Well, consider this statement, treated as basic fact by every student of the sciences in the galaxy: Matter and energy cannot be created or destroyed; they can only change from one form to another.

When a living creature dies, it becomes inanimate. Any energy that was stored within that body is lost. Lost. Not destroyed. Even "lost," though, carries inaccurate connotations, since the energy cannot be lost but can only change from one form to another. (4)

To understand death, then, one must first understand that it is not truly a "loss" of anything. It is simply a transformation of the energy that provides the vital essence of the individual from one form to another.

The Force as Energy While we are not Jedi, we do find many of their texts (at least, those made available to the general public) of great interest and help in understanding the meaning of death. Any student of the Force will likely recall the words of Jedi Master Ood Bnar, who wrote of the Force as a "mystical energy field" that surrounds all living things. (5) We suggest that this is the energy present in each of us, which animates us and gives us our individuality, and that when our bodies fail us, this energy changes form and merges once again with the Force, serving to bind the galaxy together.

The meaning of this should be immediately clear. Who we are - - who we really are, if we are to understand ourselves in the context of the galaxy and not just in an egocentric manner - - is not the body that others see. That body is flesh, which ages, withers, and dies. It is a vessel, a container, and one that does not always serve its purpose particularly well. Pimples, pus, embarrassing odors at inopportune moments - - these are reflections of the body we inhabit, not the person we are. The person we are exists on the inside. Not in the guts of the individual, but in the energy that courses through us, which makes us part of something greater than ourselves.

The key to understanding death (and life) is to realize that we all have the Force inside us. Not all of us are Jedi. Not all of us can even feel the Force, most of the time. But it is there. It is what makes us into something more than crude piles of matter that stumble our way through life. It is inside us all, and we are part of it, and when we die, the energy that allowed us to live does not simply cease to exist. It merges once more into the Force, and the individual becomes part of the whole - - from which he was never separated, truly, to begin with.

The Jedi Code has it right, though it doesn't go far enough in explaining its words. Ultimately, the key to understanding and coping with death is to realize that it is not something to be feared; it is part of who we are. For a time, a small part of the Force takes up residence inside our bodies. The bodies, inevitably, fail. The Force lives on. Thus, death is not to be feared, because in a very real sense, "There is no death; there is the Force." (6)

(1) Translated from the Ithorian "Life's Memories" by Soshu Londahl, as originally published in the anthology *Lyrical Metaphysics: Ode on an Odon*, edited by Soshu Londahl, Coruscanti Publishing.

(2)We use this term in the loosest possible sense; we are aware that some readers will view "people" as a Humanocentric term, since in Basic, "people" is often used to shorthand "Human" in everyday speech. We prefer a more inclusive understanding of the term, using "peoples" to refer to all the sentient creatures (and potentially nonsentients, though this may perhaps be stretching the term beyond its utility) that reside in the galaxy. If this usage offends, we apologize, but believe it to be the least exclusionary and most succinct of our linguistic options.

(3)Excerpted from Mother Dariana's memorial speech at the funeral celebration of a major Cularin figure, six months ago.

(4)This forces us to draw a distinction that is not wholly accurate, in our opinion, between the physical body and the energies that make us up. We will return to this distinction shortly.

(5)Ood Bnar, Lectures on the Nature of the Force; Jedi Temple, Coruscant.

(6)From "The Jedi Code."